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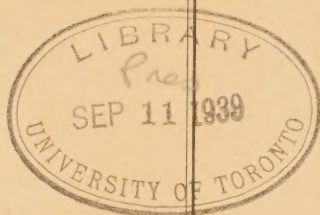


DOCUMENTS

relating to the

OUTBREAK OF WAR

SEPTEMBER, 1939



A

Communications exchanged between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of the German Reich, between the 22nd of August and the 3rd of September, 1939, together with statements made in the House of Commons by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

B

Communications addressed by the Prime Minister of Canada to the Heads of certain European States in August, 1939, and replies thereto.

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A

**COMMUNICATIONS EXCHANGED BETWEEN HIS MAJESTY'S
GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE GOV-
ERNMENT OF THE GERMAN REICH, BETWEEN THE 22nd
OF AUGUST AND THE 3rd OF SEPTEMBER, 1939, TO-
GETHER WITH STATEMENTS MADE IN THE HOUSE OF
COMMONS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED
KINGDOM.**

(Documents numbered I to XIV inclusive are reprinted from the White Paper published by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on the 1st of September, 1939. Documents XV to XX inclusive are communications exchanged between the two Governments and addresses delivered subsequent to the printing of the White Paper.)

I

*The letter of the 22nd of August, 1939, from the Prime Minister
of the United Kingdom to the German Chancellor.*

10 DOWNING STREET,

LONDON, Aug. 22, 1939.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—Your Excellency will have already heard of certain measures taken by His Majesty's Government and announced in the press and on the wireless this evening.

These steps have in the opinion of His Majesty's Government been rendered necessary by the military movements which have been reported from Germany, and by the fact that apparently the announcement of a German-Soviet agreement is taken in some quarters in Berlin to indicate that intervention by Great Britain on behalf of Poland is no longer a contingency that need be reckoned with.

No greater mistake could be made. Whatever may prove to be the nature of the German-Soviet agreement, it cannot alter Great Britain's obligations to Poland which His Majesty's Government have stated in public repeatedly and plainly and which they are determined to fulfil.

It has been alleged that if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914, a great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding.

If the case should arise, they are resolved and prepared to employ without delay all the forces at their command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged.

It would be a dangerous illusion to think that if war once starts it will come to an early end even if success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.

Having thus made our position perfectly clear I wish to repeat to you my conviction that war between our two peoples would be the greatest calamity that could occur. I am certain that it is desired neither by our people nor by yours and I cannot see that there is anything in the questions arising between Germany and Poland which could not and should not be resolved without the use of force if only a situation of confidence could be restored to enable discussions to be carried on in an atmosphere different from that which prevails to-day.

We have been and at all times will be ready to assist in creating conditions in which such negotiations could take place, and in which it might be possible concurrently to discuss the wider problems affecting the future of international relations, including matters of interest to us and to you.

The difficulties in the way of any peaceful discussion in the present state of tension are however obvious and the longer that tension is maintained the harder it will be for reason to prevail.

These difficulties, however, might be mitigated if not removed provided that there could for an initial period be a truce on both sides, and indeed, on all sides, to press polemics and to all incitement.

If such a truce could be arranged, then at the end of that period, during which steps could be taken to examine and deal with complaints made by either side as to the treatment of minorities, it is reasonable to hope that suitable conditions might have been established for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland upon the issues between them with the aid of a neutral intermediary if both sides should think that would be helpful.

But I am bound to say there would be slender hope of bringing such negotiations to a successful issue unless it were understood beforehand that any settlement reached would, when concluded, be guaranteed by other powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready if desired to make such contribution as it could to the effective operation of such guarantees.

At this moment I confess I can see no other way to avoid a catastrophe that will involve Europe in war.

In view of the grave consequences to humanity which may follow from the action of their rulers, I trust that Your Excellency will weigh with the utmost deliberation the considerations which I have put before you.

Yours sincerely,

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

II

The letter from the German Chancellor to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, which was handed to His Majesty's Ambassador on the 23rd of August, 1939.

Your Excellency,—The British Ambassador has just handed to me a communication in which Your Excellency draws attention, in the name of the British Government, to a number of points which, in your estimation, are of the greatest importance.

I may be permitted to answer your letter as follows:

1. Germany has never sought conflict with England and has never interfered in English interests. On the contrary she has for years endeavoured—although unfortunately in vain—to win England's friendship. On this account she voluntarily assumed in a wide area of Europe the limitations on her own interests which from a national-political point of view would have otherwise been very difficult to tolerate.

2. The German Reich, however, like every other state, possesses certain definite interests which it is impossible to renounce. These do not extend beyond the limits of the necessities laid down by former German history and deriving from vital economic prerequisites. Some of these questions held and still hold significance both of a national-political and psychological character which no German Government is able to ignore.

To these questions belong the German city of Danzig and the connected problem of the Corridor. Numerous statesmen, historians, and men of letters, even in England, have been conscious of this at any rate up to a few years ago.

I would add that all these territories lying in the aforesaid German sphere of interest and, in particular, those lands which returned to the Reich 18 months ago, received their cultural development at the hands, not of the English, but exclusively of the Germans. And this, moreover, from a time dating back over 1,000 years.

3. Germany was prepared to settle the questions of Danzig and of the Corridor by the method of negotiation on the basis of a proposal of truly unparalleled magnanimity. The allegations disseminated by England regarding German mobilization against Poland, the assertion of aggressive designs towards Rumania and Hungary, etc., etc., as well as the so-called guarantee declarations which were subsequently given, had, however, dispelled the Polish inclination to negotiate on a basis of this kind which would have been tolerable for Germany also.

4. The unconditional assurance given by England to Poland that she would render assistance to that country in all circumstances regardless of the causes from which a conflict might spring, could only be interpreted

in that country as an encouragement thenceforward to unloosen, under cover of such a charter, a wave of appalling terrorism against 1,500,000 German inhabitants living in Poland. The atrocities which since then have been taking place in that country are terrible for the victims but intolerable for a great power such as the German Reich which is expected to remain a passive onlooker during these happenings. Poland has been guilty of numerous breaches of her legal obligations towards the Free City of Danzig, has made demands in the character of ultimata, and has initiated a process of economic strangulation.

5. The Government of the German Reich, therefore, recently caused the Polish Government to be informed that it was not prepared passively to accept this development of affairs; that it will not tolerate the further addressing of notes in the character of ultimata to Danzig; that it will not tolerate continuation of the persecutions of the German minority; that it will equally not tolerate the extermination of the Free City of Danzig by economic measures—in other words the destruction of the vital bases of the population of Danzig by a kind of customs blockade; and that it will not tolerate occurrence of further acts of provocation directed against the Reich. Apart from this the questions of the Corridor and of Danzig must and shall be solved.

6. Your Excellency informs me in the name of the British Government that you will be obliged to render assistance to Poland in any such case of intervention on the part of Germany. I take note of this statement of yours and assure you that it can make no change in the determination of the Reich Government to safeguard the interests of the Reich as stated in paragraph 5 above. Your assurance to the effect that in such an event you anticipate a long war is shared by myself. Germany, if attacked by England, will be found prepared and determined. I have already more than once declared before the German people and the world that there can be no doubt concerning the determination of the new German Reich rather to accept, for however long it might be, every sort of misery and tribulation than to sacrifice its national interests, let alone its honor.

7. The German Reich Government has received information to the effect that the British Government has the intention to carry out measures of mobilization which, according to the statements contained in your own letter, are clearly directed against Germany alone. This is said to be true of France as well. Since Germany has never had any intention of taking military measures other than those of a defensive character against England or France, and as has already been emphasized, has never intended and does not in the future intend to attack England or France, it follows that this announcement, as confirmed by you Mr. Prime Minister in your own letter, can only refer to a contemplated act of menace directed against the Reich. I therefore inform Your Excellency that in the event of these military announcements being carried into effect I shall order immediate mobilization of the German forces.

8. The question of the treatment of European problems on a peaceful basis is not a decision which rests on Germany but primarily on those who, since the crime committed by the Versailles dictate, have stubbornly and consistently opposed any peaceful revision. Only after a change of spirit on the part of the responsible powers can there be any real change in the relationship between England and Germany. I have all my life fought for Anglo-German friendship. The attitude adopted by British diplomacy—at any rate up to the present—has, however, convinced me of the futility of such an attempt. Should there be any change in this respect in the future nobody could be happier than I.

(Signed) Adolf Hitler.

III

The supplementary communication from the German Chancellor to His Majesty's Ambassador on the 25th of August, 1939.

By way of introduction the Fuehrer declared that the British Ambassador had given expression at the close of their last conversation to the hope that after all an understanding between Germany and England might yet be possible. He, the Fuehrer, had therefore turned things over in his mind once more and desired to make a move as regards England which should be as decisive as the move as regards Russia which had led to the recent agreement.

Yesterday's sitting in the House of Commons and the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had also moved the Fuehrer to talk once more to the British ambassador.

The assertion that Germany affected to conquer the world was ridiculous. The British Empire embraced 40,000,000 square kilometres, Russia 19,000,000 square kilometres, America 9,500,000 square kilometres, whereas Germany embraces less than 600,000 square kilometres. It is quite clear who it is who desires to conquer the world.

The Fuehrer makes the following communication to the British ambassador:

1. Poland's actual provocations have become intolerable. It makes no difference who is responsible. If the Polish Government denies the responsibility that only goes to show that it no longer itself possesses any influence over its subordinate military authorities.

In the preceding night there had been a further 21 new frontier incidents; on the German side the greatest discipline had been maintained. All incidents had been provoked from the Polish side, furthermore commercial aircraft had been shot at. If the Polish Government stated that it was not responsible it showed that it no longer was capable of controlling its own people.

2. Germany was, in all circumstances, determined to abolish these Macedonian conditions on her eastern frontier and, what is more, to do so in the interests of quiet and order, but also in the interests of European peace.

3. The problem of Danzig and the Corridor must be solved. The British Prime Minister had made a speech which was not in the least calculated to induce any change in the German attitude. At the most the result of this speech could be a bloody and incalculable war between Germany and England. Such a war would be bloodier than that of 1914 to 1918. In contrast to the last war, Germany would no longer have to fight on two fronts. The agreement with Russia was unconditional and signified a change in the foreign policy of the Reich which would last a very long time. Russia and Germany would never again take up arms against each other. Apart from this, the agreement reached with Russia would also render Germany secure economically for the longest possible period of war.

The Fuehrer had always wanted an Anglo-German understanding. War between England and Germany could at best bring some profit to Germany but none at all to England.

The Fuehrer declared that the German-Polish problem must be solved and will be solved. He is, however, prepared and determined, after the solution of this problem, to approach England once more with a large and comprehensive offer. He is a man of great decisions and in this case also he will be capable of being great in his action.

He accepts the British Empire and is ready to pledge himself personally for its continued existence and to place the power of the German Reich at its disposal if:

(1) His colonial demands, which are limited and can be negotiated by peaceful methods, are fulfilled, and, in this case, he is prepared to fix the longest time limit.

(2) His obligations toward Italy are not touched; in other words he does not demand that England give up her obligations towards France and similarly, for his own part, he cannot withdraw from his obligations towards Italy.

(3) He also desires to stress the irrevocable determination of Germany never again to enter into a conflict with Russia. The Fuehrer is ready to conclude agreements with England which, as has already been emphasized, would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire in all circumstances as far as Germany is concerned but also would if necessary give an assurance to the British Empire of German assistance regardless of where such assistance should be necessary.

The Fuehrer would then also be ready to accept a reasonable limitation of armaments which corresponded to the new political situation and which was economically tolerable. Finally the Fuehrer renewed his assurances that he was not interested in Western problems and that frontier modification in the West does not enter into consideration.

The Western fortifications which had been constructed at the cost of milliards were the final Reich frontier on the West.

If the British Government would consider these ideas, a blessing for Germany and also for the British Empire might result. If it rejects these ideas there will be war. In no case would Great Britain emerge stronger. The last war proved this.

IV

The reply of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom dated the 28th of August, 1939, to the German Chancellor's communications of the 23rd and 25th of August, 1939.

His Majesty's Government have received the message conveyed to them from the German Chancellor by His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin and have considered it with the care which it demands. They note the Chancellor's expression of his desire to make friendship the basis of relations between Germany and the British Empire and they fully share this desire.

They believe with him that if a complete and lasting understanding between the two countries could be established it would bring untold blessings to both peoples.

The Chancellor's message deals with two groups of questions:

Those which are matters now in dispute between Germany and Poland and those affecting the ultimate relations of Germany and Great Britain. In connection with these last His Majesty's Government observe that the German Chancellor has indicated certain proposals which, subject to one condition, he would be prepared to make to the British Government for a general understanding.

These proposals are of course stated in very general form and would require closer definition but His Majesty's Government are fully prepared to take them, with some additions, as subjects for discussion, and they would be ready, if differences between Germany and Poland are peacefully composed, to proceed so soon as practicable to such discussion with a sincere desire to reach agreement.

The condition which the German Chancellor lays down is that there must first be a settlement of differences between Germany and Poland.

As to that His Majesty's Government entirely agree. Everything, however, turns upon the nature of that settlement and the method by which it is to be reached.

On these points, the importance of which cannot be absent from the Chancellor's mind, his message is silent and His Majesty's Government feel compelled to point out that an understanding upon both of these is essential to achieving further progress.

The German Government will be aware that His Majesty's Government have obligations to Poland by which they are bound and which they intend to honour. They could not for any advantage offered to Great Britain acquiesce in a settlement which put in jeopardy the independence of a state to whom they have given their guarantee.

In the opinion of His Majesty's Government, a reasonable solution of the differences between Germany and Poland could and should be effected by agreement between the two countries on lines which would include safeguarding Poland's essential interests, and they recall that in his speech of the 28th of April last the German Chancellor recognized the importance of these interests to Poland.

But, as was stated by the Prime Minister in his letter to the German Chancellor of the 22nd of August, His Majesty's Government consider it essential for the success of discussions which would precede an agreement that it should be understood beforehand that any settlement arrived at would be guaranteed by other powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready, if desired, to make their contribution to the effective operation of such a guarantee.

In the view of His Majesty's Government it follows that the next step should be initiation of direct discussions between the German and Polish Governments on a basis which would include the principles stated above, namely the safeguarding of Poland's essential interests and the securing of the settlement by an international guarantee.

They have already received a definite assurance from the Polish Government that they are prepared to enter into discussions on this basis and His Majesty's Government hope the German Government would, for their part, also be willing to agree to this course.

If, as His Majesty's Government hope, such a discussion led to an agreement, the way would be open to the negotiation of that wider and more complete understanding between Great Britain and Germany which both countries desire.

His Majesty's Government agree with the German Chancellor that one of the principal dangers in the German-Polish situation arises from the reports concerning the treatment of minorities. The present state of tension with its concomitant frontier incidents, reports of maltreatment and inflammatory propaganda, is a constant danger to peace.

It is manifestly a matter of utmost urgency that all incidents of this kind should be promptly and rigidly suppressed and that unverified reports should not be allowed to circulate in order that time may be afforded, without provocation on either side, for a full examination of the possibilities of settlement.

His Majesty's Government are confident that both Governments concerned are fully alive to these considerations.

6. His Majesty's Government have said enough to make their own attitude clear in the particular matters at issue between Germany and Poland. They trust that the German Chancellor will not think that, because His Majesty's Government are scrupulous concerning their obligations to Poland, they are not anxious to use all their influence to assist in achievement of a solution which may commend itself both to Germany and to Poland. That such a settlement should be achieved seems to His Majesty's Government essential not only for reasons directly arising in regard to the settlement itself, but also because of wider considerations of which the German Chancellor has spoken with such conviction.

7. It is justified in the present reply to stress the advantage of a peaceful settlement over a decision to settle the questions at issue by force of arms. The results of a decision to use force have been clearly set out in the Prime Minister's letter to the Chancellor of the 22nd of August and His Majesty's Government do not doubt that they are as fully recognized by the Chancellor as by themselves.

On the other hand, His Majesty's Government, noting with interest the German Chancellor's reference in a message now under consideration to the limitation of armaments, believe that if a peaceful settlement can be obtained, the assistance of the world could confidently be anticipated for practical measures to enable a transition from preparation for war to the normal activities of peaceful trade to be safely and smoothly effected.

8. A just settlement of these questions between Germany and Poland may open the way to world peace. Failure to reach it would ruin the hopes of a better understanding between Germany and Great Britain, would bring the two countries into conflict and might well plunge the whole world into war. Such an outcome would be a calamity without parallel in history.

V

The reply of the German Chancellor, handed to His Majesty's Ambassador during the evening of the 29th of August, 1939, to the communication of the 28th of August, 1939, from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

The British Ambassador in Berlin has submitted to the British Government suggestions which I felt bound to make in order:

1. To give expression once more to the will of the Reich Government for sincere Anglo-German understanding, co-operation and friendship.

2. To leave no room for doubt as to the fact that such an understanding could not be bought at the price of a renunciation of vital

German interests, let alone the abandonment of demands which are based as much upon common human justice as upon the national dignity and honour of our people.

The German Government have noted with satisfaction from the reply of the British Government and from oral explanations given by the British Ambassador that the British Government for their part are also prepared to improve the relationship between Germany and England and to develop and extend it in the sense of the German suggestions.

In this connection the British Government are similarly convinced that removal of the German-Polish tension which has become unbearable is a prerequisite for the realization of this hope.

Since the Autumn of the past year and on the last occasion in March, 1939, there were submitted to the Polish Government proposals both oral and written which, having regard to the friendship then existing between Germany and Poland, offered the possibility of a solution of questions in dispute acceptable to both parties.

The British Government are aware that the Polish Government saw fit in March last, finally to reject these proposals. At the same time they used this rejection as a pretext or an occasion for taking military measures which since have been continuously intensified. Already in the middle of last month, Poland was in effect in a state of mobilization. This was accompanied by numerous encroachments in the free city of Danzig due to the instigation of Polish authorities; threatening demands in the nature of ultimata, varying only in degree, were addressed to that city.

Closing of frontiers, at first in the form of a measure of customs policy but later extended in a military sense affecting also traffic and communications, was imposed with the object of bringing about the political exhaustion and economic destruction of this German community.

To this were added barbaric actions of maltreatment which cry to heaven, and other kinds of persecution of the large German national group in Poland which extended even to killing of many resident Germans or to their forcible removal under the most cruel conditions. This state of affairs is unbearable for a great power. It now has forced Germany after remaining a passive onlooker for many months, in her turn to take the necessary steps for the safeguarding of justified German interests. And indeed the German Government can but assure the British Government in the most solemn manner that a condition of affairs has now been reached which can no longer be accepted or observed with indifference.

The demands of the German Government are in conformity with the revision of the Versailles treaty in regard to this territory which has always been recognized as being necessary; viz., the return of Danzig

and the Corridor to Germany and the safeguarding of the existence of the German national groups in the territories remaining to Poland.

The Government note with satisfaction that the British Government under the circumstances, are in principle convinced that some solution must be found for the new situation which has arisen. They further feel justified in assuming that the British Government too can have no doubt that it is a question now of conditions for the elimination of which there no longer remain days, still less weeks, but perhaps only hours. For in the disorganized state of affairs obtaining in Poland the possibility of incidents intervening which it might be impossible for Germany to tolerate must at any moment be reckoned with.

While the British Government may still believe that these grave differences can be resolved by way of direct negotiations, the German Government unfortunately can no longer share this view as a matter of speculation. For they have made attempts to embark on such peaceful negotiations but instead of receiving support from the Polish Government they were rebuffed by the sudden introduction of measures of a military character into the developments alluded to above.

The British Government attach importance to two considerations, (1) that the existing danger of an imminent explosion should be eliminated as quickly as possible by direct negotiation and that (2) the existence of a Polish state in the form in which it would then continue to exist should be adequately safeguarded in the economic and political spheres by means of international guarantees.

On this subject the German Government make the following declaration:

Though sceptical as to the prospects of a successful outcome, they nevertheless are prepared to accept the English proposal and enter into direct discussions. They do so, as has already been emphasized, solely as the result of the impression made upon them by the written statements received from the British Government that they too desire a pact of friendship in accordance with the general lines indicated to the British Ambassador.

The German Government desire in this way to give the British Government and the British nation proof of the sincerity of Germany's intentions to enter into a lasting friendship with Great Britain.

The Government of the Reich feel bound, however, to point out to the British Government that in the event of a territorial rearrangement in Poland, they would no longer be able to bind themselves to give guarantees or participate in guarantees without the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics being associated therewith.

In making these proposals the German Government have never had any intention of touching Poland's vital interests or of questioning the existence of an independent Polish state. The German Government accordingly, in these circumstances, agrees to accept the British

Government's offer of their good offices in securing the despatch to Berlin of a Polish emissary with full powers. They count on the arrival of this emissary on Wednesday, the 30th of August, 1939.

The German Government will immediately draw up proposals for a solution acceptable to themselves and will, if possible, place these at the disposal of the British Government before the arrival of the Polish negotiator.

VI

The telegram from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to Sir Nevile Henderson sent at 2.00 a.m. on the 30th of August, 1939.

We shall give careful consideration to the German Government's reply but it is of course unreasonable to expect the arrival of the Polish representative in Berlin to-day and the German Government must not expect this.

It might be well for you at once to let this be known in the proper quarters through appropriate channels. We hope you may receive our reply this afternoon.

VII

The message sent, through Sir Nevile Henderson, from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the German Chancellor at 2.40 p.m. on the 30th of August, 1939.

We are considering the German note with all urgency and we shall send an official reply later in the afternoon.

We are representing at Warsaw how vital it is to reinforce all instructions for the avoidance of frontier incidents and I would beg you to confirm similar instructions on the German side.

I welcome the evidence in the exchanges of views which are taking place of that desire for Anglo-German understanding of which I spoke yesterday in Parliament.

VIII

The telegram from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to Sir Nevile Henderson, sent at 5.30 p.m. on the 30th of August, 1939.

In informing the German Government of the renewed representations which have been made in Warsaw please make it clear that the

Polish Government can only be expected to maintain an attitude of complete restraint if the German Government reciprocate on their side of the frontier and if no provocation is offered by members of the German minority in Poland. Reports are current that Germans have committed acts of sabotage which would justify the sternest measures.

IX

The telegram from His Majesty's Government to Sir Neville Henderson sent at 6.50 p.m. on the 30th of August, 1939.

We understand that the German Government is insisting that the Polish representative with full powers must come to Berlin to receive German proposals.

We cannot advise the Polish Government to comply with this procedure which is wholly unreasonable.

Could you not suggest to the German Government that they adopt the normal procedure, when their proposals are ready, of inviting the Polish ambassador to call and handing the proposals to him for transmission to Warsaw and inviting suggestions as to the conduct of negotiations?

The German Government have been good enough to promise they will communicate the proposals also to His Majesty's Government. If the latter think they offer a reasonable basis they can be counted on to do their best in Warsaw to facilitate negotiations.

X

The reply of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the German Chancellor's communication of the 29th of August, 1939, which was handed to Herr Hitler at midnight on the 30th of August, 1939.

His Majesty's Government appreciate the friendly reference in the communication containing the reply of the German Government to the latter's desire for an Anglo-German understanding, and to their statement of the influence which this consideration has exercised upon their policy.

His Majesty's Government repeat that they reciprocate the German Government's desire for improved relations, but it will be recognized that they could not sacrifice the interests of other friends in order to obtain that improvement. They fully understand that the German Government cannot sacrifice Germany's vital interests but the Polish

Government are in same position and His Majesty's Government believe that the vital interests of the two countries are not incompatible.

His Majesty's Government note that the German Government accept the British proposal and are prepared to enter into direct discussions with the Polish Government. His Majesty's Government understand that the German Government accept in principle the condition that any settlement should be made the subject of an international guarantee. The question of who shall participate in this guarantee will have to be discussed further, and His Majesty's Government hope that to avoid loss of time the German Government will take immediate steps to obtain the assent of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics whose participation in the guarantee His Majesty's Government have always assumed.

His Majesty's Government also note that the German Government accepts the position of the British Government as to Poland's vital interests and independence.

His Majesty's Government must make an express reservation in regard to the statement of the particular demands put forward by the German Government in an earlier passage in their reply. They understand that the German Government are drawing up proposals for a solution. No doubt these proposals will be fully examined during the discussions. It can then be determined how far they are compatible with the essential conditions which His Majesty's Government have stated, and which, in principle the German Government have expressed their willingness to accept.

His Majesty's Government are at once informing the Polish Government of the German Government's reply.

The method of contact and the arrangements for the discussions must obviously be agreed to with all urgency between the German and the Polish Governments, but in His Majesty's Government's view it would be impracticable to establish contact so early as to-day.

His Majesty's Government fully recognize the need for speed in the initiation of discussions and they share the apprehension of the Chancellor arising from the proximity of two mobilized armies standing face to face. They would accordingly most strongly urge that both parties should undertake that during negotiations no aggressive military movements will take place.

His Majesty's Government feel confident that they could obtain such an undertaking from the Polish Government if the German Government would give similar assurances.

Further, His Majesty's Government would suggest that a temporary *modus vivendi* might be arranged for Danzig which might prevent the occurrence of incidents tending to render German-Polish relations more difficult.

XI

The message which was communicated to His Majesty's Ambassador by the German State Secretary on the 31st of August, 1939.

His Majesty's Government informed the German Government in a note dated August 28, 1939, of their readiness to offer their mediation towards direct negotiations between Germany and Poland over the problems in dispute.

In so doing they made it abundantly clear that they, too, were aware of the urgent need for progress in view of the continuous incidents and the general European tension.

In a reply dated August 29, 1939, the German Government, in spite of being sceptical as to the desire of the Polish Government to come to an understanding, declared themselves ready in the interests of peace to accept British mediation or suggestion.

After considering all circumstances prevailing at the time, they considered it necessary in their note to point out that if the danger of catastrophe was to be avoided, then action must be taken readily and without delay. In this sense they declared themselves ready to receive a personage appointed by the Polish Government up to the evening of the 30th of August, with the proviso that the latter was in fact empowered not only to discuss but to conduct and conclude negotiations.

Further the German Government pointed out that they felt able to make the basic points regarding the offer of an understanding available to the British Government by the time the Polish negotiator arrived in Berlin.

Instead of a statement regarding the arrival of an authorized Polish personage, the first answer the Government of the Reich received to their readiness for an understanding, was news of Polish mobilization and only towards 12 o'clock on the night of the 30th of August, 1939, did they receive a somewhat general assurance of British readiness to help towards commencement of negotiations.

Although the fact that the Polish negotiator expected by the Government of the Reich did not arrive removed the necessary conditions for informing His Majesty's Government of the view of the German Government as regards possible bases for negotiation since His Majesty's Government themselves had pleaded for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr von Ribbentrop, gave the British Ambassador on the occasion of the presentation of the last British note precise information as to the text of the German proposals which would be regarded as a basis of negotiation in the event of the arrival of a Polish plenipotentiary.

The Government of the German Reich considered themselves entitled to claim that in these circumstances a Polish personage would immediately be nominated at any rate retroactively.

For the Reich Government cannot be expected for their part continually not only to emphasize their willingness to start negotiations but actually to be ready to do so while being, from the Polish side, merely put off with empty subterfuges and meaningless declarations.

It has once more been made clear as a result of the *démarche* which has meanwhile been made by the Polish ambassador that the latter himself has no plenary powers either to enter into any discussion or even to negotiate.

The Fuehrer and the German Government have thus waited two days in vain for the arrival of a Polish negotiator with plenary powers.

In these circumstances the German Government regard their proposals as having this time, too, been to all intents and purposes rejected, although they considered that these proposals in the form in which they were made known to the British Government, also were more than loyal, fair and practicable.

The Reich Government consider it timely to inform the public of the bases for negotiation which were communicated to the British Ambassador by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr von Ribbentrop.

The situation existing between the German Reich and Poland is at the moment of such a kind that any further incident can lead to an explosion on the part of military forces which have taken up their position on both sides. Any peaceful solution must be framed in such a way as to ensure that events which lie at the root of this situation cannot be repeated on the next occasion offered and that thus not only the east of Europe but also other territories shall not be brought into such a state of tension.

Causes of this development lie in:

1. Impossible delineation of frontiers as fixed by the Versailles dictate;
2. Impossible treatment of the minority in ceded territories.

In making these proposals, the Reich Government are therefore actuated by the idea of finding a lasting solution which will remove the impossible situation created by the frontier delineation which may assure to both parties their vitally important line of communications and which may—as far as it is at all possible—remove the minority problem and in so far as this is not possible may give the minorities assurance of a tolerable future by means of a reliable guarantee of their rights.

The Reich Government are content that in so doing it is essential that the economic and physical damage done since 1918 should be exposed and repaired in its entirety. They, of course, regard this obligation as being binding for both parties.

These considerations lead to the following practical proposals:

1. The Free City of Danzig shall return to the German Reich in view of its purely German character, as well as of the unanimous will of its population.

2. The territory of the so-called Corridor which extends from the Baltic Sea to the line of the Marienwerde—Graudenz-Kulk-Bromberg (inclusive) and thence may run in a westerly direction to Schonlanke, shall itself decide whether it shall belong to Germany or Poland.

3. For this purpose a plebiscite shall take place in this territory. The following shall be entitled to vote: All Germans who were either domiciled in this territory on the above day (the 14th of January, 1918), or were born there up to that day and similarly Poles, Kashubes, etc. Germans who have been driven from this territory shall return to it in order to exercise their vote with a view of ensuring an objective plebiscite and also with a view to ensuring the extensive preparation necessary therefor. The above territory shall, as in the case of the Saar territory, be placed under the supervision of an international commission to be formed immediately on which shall be represented the four great powers—Italy, Soviet Union, France and England. This commission shall exercise all rights of sovereignty in this territory. With this end in view, the territory shall be evacuated within a period of utmost brevity still to be agreed upon, by the Polish armed forces, Polish police and Polish authorities.

4. The Polish port of Gdynia, which fundamentally constitutes Polish sovereign territory, so far as it is confined territorially to a Polish settlement shall be excluded from the above territory. The exact frontiers of this Polish port should be determined between Germany and Poland and, if necessary, delimited by an international committee of arbitration.

5. With a view to assuring the necessary time for execution of the extensive work involved in carrying out of a just plebiscite, this plebiscite shall not take place before the expiry of 12 months.

6. In order to guarantee unrestricted communication between Germany and East Prussia and between Poland and the sea during this period, roads and railways shall be established to render free transit traffic possible. In this connection, only such taxes as are necessary for the maintenance of means of communication and for provision of transport may be levied.

7. The question as to the party to which the area belongs is to be decided by a simple majority of the votes recorded.

8. In order to guarantee to Germany free communication with her province of Danzig and East Prussia, and to Poland her connection with the sea, after execution of the plebiscite—regardless of the results thereof—Germany shall in the event of the plebiscite area going to Poland receive an extraterritorial traffic zone, approximately in a line from

Butow to Danzig or Dirschau on which to lay down an autobahn (or speed highway) and a four track railway line. The road and railway line shall be so constructed that Polish lines of communication are not affected, that is they shall pass either over or under the latter.

The breadth of this zone shall be fixed at one kilometre and it is to be German sovereign territory. Should the plebiscite be favourable to Germany, Poland is to obtain rights analogous to those accorded to Germany to a similar extra-territorial communication by road and railway for the purpose of free and unrestricted communication with her port of Gdynia;

9. In the event of the Corridor returning to the German Reich the latter declares its right to proceed to an exchange of population with Poland to the extent that the nature of the Corridor lends itself thereto;

10. Any special right desired by Poland in the port of Danzig would be negotiated on the basis of territory against similar rights to be granted to Germany in the port of Gdynia;

11. In order to remove any feeling in this area that either side was being threatened Danzig and Gdynia would have the character of exclusively mercantile towns, that is to say without military installations and military fortifications;

12. The Peninsula of Hel, which as a result of the plebiscite might go either to Poland or to Germany, would in either case have similarly to be demilitarized.

13. Since the Government of the German Reich has the most vehement complaints to make against Polish treatment of minorities and since the Polish Government for their part feel obliged to make complaints against Germany, both parties declare their agreement to have those complaints laid before an international committee of inquiry, whose task would be to examine all complaints as regards economic or physical damage and any other acts of terrorism. Germany and Poland undertake to make good economic or other damage done to minorities on either side since the year 1918, or to cancel expropriation as the case may be, or to provide complete compensation to persons affected for this and any other encroachments on their economic life.

14. In order to free the Germans who may be left in Poland and the Poles who may be left in Germany from the feeling of being outlawed by all nations, and in order to render them secure against being called upon to perform any action or to render services incompatible with their national sentiments, Germany and Poland agree to guarantee the rights of both minorities by means of a most comprehensive and binding agreement in order to guarantee to these minorities preservation, free development and practical application of their nationality (*volkstum*) and in particular to permit for this purpose such organization as they may consider necessary. Both parties undertake not to call upon members of the minority for military service.

15. In the event of an agreement on the basis of these proposals, Germany and Poland declare themselves ready to decree and to carry out immediate demobilization of their armed forces.

16. Further measures necessary for more rapid execution of the above arrangement shall be agreed upon by both Germany and Poland conjointly.

XII

The telegram from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to Sir Nevile Henderson despatched at 11.00 p.m. on the 31st of August, 1939.

Please inform the German Government that we understand that the Polish Government are taking steps to establish contact with them through the Polish Ambassador in Berlin.

Please also ask them whether they agree to the necessity for securing an immediate provisional *modus vivendi* as regards Danzig?

We have already put this point to the German Government.

Would they agree that M. Burckhardt might be employed for this purpose if it were possible to secure his services?

XIII

His Majesty's Ambassador's reply to the telegram from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, received in the early hours of the morning of the 1st of September, 1939.

A written communication was made to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs early this morning in the sense of paragraph two of your telegram.

XIV

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom suggest that the following explanatory note should be read in conjunction with the documents published above.

The reply to the German Government of August 28, 1939, was, before its delivery, communicated to the French and Polish Governments. The Polish Government authorized His Majesty's Government to inform the German Government that Poland was ready at once to

enter into direct discussions with Germany. It will be seen that paragraph four of the British reply on August 28 made plain the attitude of the Polish Government on this point.

The British reply was handed to Herr Hitler at 10.30 p.m. on August 28 and he promised to give a written reply the following day.

The German reply in writing was handed to His Majesty's Ambassador at 7.15 p.m. August 29. Apart from the complete distortion of the events leading up to the crisis the German Government's reply demanded the arrival in Berlin of a Polish emissary with full powers during the course of the following day.

The reply of the British Government is self-explanatory. It was communicated by His Majesty's Ambassador to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs at midnight August 30. Herr von Ribbentrop's reply was to produce a long document which he read out rapidly in German. It was apparently the 16-point plan which the German Government have since published. When Sir Nevile Henderson asked for the text of these proposals in accordance with the undertaking in the German reply of August 29 Herr von Ribbentrop asserted that it was now too late as the Polish plenipotentiary had not arrived in Berlin by midnight as had been demanded by the German Government in their communication of the previous evening.

The Polish Government on learning of these developments informed His Majesty's Government during the afternoon of the 31st of August that they would authorize their ambassador to inform the German Government that Poland had accepted the British proposals for negotiations.

The Polish Ambassador in Berlin (M. Lipski) was not received by Herr von Ribbentrop until the evening of the 31st of August. After this interview the German Government broadcast their proposals forthwith. M. Lipski at once tried to establish contact with Warsaw but was unable to do so because all means of communication between Poland and Germany had been closed by the German Government.

XV

The statement of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom delivered in the House of Commons on the 1st of September, 1939.

"I do not propose to say many words to-night. The time has come when action rather than speech is required. Eighteen months ago, in this House, I prayed that the responsibility might not fall upon me to ask this country to accept the awful arbitrament of war. I fear that I may not be able to avoid that responsibility, but at any rate, I cannot wish for conditions, in which such a burden should fall upon me, clearer than they are to-day.

As to where my duty lies, no man can say that the Government could have done more to try to keep open the way for an honourable and equitable settlement of the dispute between Germany and Poland, nor have we neglected any means of making it crystal clear to the German Government that, if they insisted on using force again in the manner in which they had used it in the past, we were resolved to oppose them by force.

Now that all the relevant documents are being made public, we shall stand at the bar of history, knowing that the responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man, the German Chancellor, who has not hesitated to plunge the world into misery, in order to serve his own senseless ambitions.

I would like to thank the House for the forbearance which they have shown on two recent occasions, in not demanding from me information, which they recognized I could not give while these negotiations were still in progress. I have now had all the correspondence with the German Government put into the form of a White Paper. On account of difficulties, I am afraid that there are but a few copies available, but I understand that they will be coming in in relays while the House is sitting.

I do not think it is necessary for me to refer in detail now to these documents which are already past history. They make it perfectly clear that our object has been to try and bring about discussions about the Polish-German disputes between the two countries themselves, on terms of equality; the settlement to be one, which safeguarded the independence of Poland and which secured its due observance by international guarantees. There is just one passage from a recent communication, which was dated the 30th August, which I should like to quote, because it shows how easily the final clash might have been averted, had there been the least desire on the part of the German Government to arrive at a peaceful settlement. In this document, we said this:—

‘His Majesty’s Government fully recognize the need for speed in the initiation of discussions, and they share the apprehensions of the Chancellor arising from the proximity of two mobilized armies standing face to face. They would accordingly most strongly urge that both parties should undertake that, during the negotiations, no aggressive military movements will take place. His Majesty’s Government feel confident that they could obtain such an undertaking from the Polish Government, if the German Government would give similar assurances.’

That telegram which was repeated to Poland brought an instantaneous reply from the Polish Government dated the 31st August in which they say:—

‘The Polish Government are also prepared on a reciprocal basis to give a formal guarantee, in the event of negotiations taking place, that Polish troops will not violate the frontiers of the German Reich, providing a corresponding guarantee is given regarding the non-violation of the frontiers of Poland by troops of the German Reich.’

We never had any reply from the German Government to that suggestion; one which, if it had been followed, might have saved the catastrophe which took place this morning.

In the German broadcast last night, which recited the 16 points of the proposals which they had put forward, there occurred this sentence: 'In these circumstances, the Reich Government considers its proposals rejected.'

I must examine that statement; I must tell the House what are the circumstances. To begin with, let me say that these proposals have never been communicated by Germany to Poland at all.

The history of the matter is this. On Tuesday, 29th August, in replying to a note which we had sent to them, the German Government said, among other things, that they would immediately draw up proposals for a solution, acceptable to themselves, and would, if possible, place these at the disposal of the British Government, before the arrival of the Polish negotiator. It will be seen by examination of the White Paper, that the German Government had stated that they counted upon the arrival of a plenipotentiary from Poland, in Berlin, on the 30th, that is to say, on the following day. In the meantime, of course, we were awaiting these proposals."

"The next evening when our Ambassador saw Herr Von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Secretary, he urged upon the latter that when these proposals were ready—for we had heard no more about them—he should invite the Polish Ambassador to call and should hand him the proposals for transmission to his Government. Thereupon, reports our Ambassador, in the most violent terms Herr Von Ribbentrop said he would never ask the Ambassador to visit him. He hinted that if the Polish Ambassador asked him for an interview it might be different.

Now the House will see that this was on Wednesday night which, according to the German statement of last night, is now claimed to be the final date after which no negotiation with Poland was acceptable. It is plain, therefore, that Germany claims to treat Poland as in the wrong because she had not by Wednesday night entered upon discussions with Germany about a set of proposals of which she had never heard.

Now, what of ourselves? On that Wednesday night, at the interview to which I have just referred, Herr Von Ribbentrop produced a lengthy document which he read out, in German, aloud at top speed. Naturally, after this reading, our Ambassador asked for a copy of the document, but the reply was that it was now too late, as the Polish representative had not arrived in Berlin by midnight. And so, Sir, we never got a copy of these proposals, and the first time we heard them was on the broadcast last night.

Well, Sir, those are the circumstances in which the German Government said that they would consider that their proposals were rejected. Is it not clear that their conception of a negotiation was that on almost instantaneous demand a Polish plenipotentiary should go to Berlin, where

others had been before him, and should there receive a statement of the demands to be accepted in their entirety, or refused?

I am not pronouncing any opinion upon the terms themselves, for I do not feel called upon to do so. The proper course in our view—in the view of all of us—was that these proposals should have been put before the Poles, who should have been given time to consider them and to say whether, in their opinion, they did or did not infringe those vital interests of Poland, which Germany had assured us on a previous occasion she intended to respect.

Only last night the Polish Ambassador did see the German Foreign Secretary, Herr Von Ribbentrop, once again. He expressed to him what indeed the Polish Government had already said publicly, that they were willing to negotiate with Germany about their disputes on an equal basis. What was the reply of the German Government? The reply was that, without another word, the German troops crossed the Polish frontier this morning at dawn, and are since reported to be bombing open towns.

In these circumstances there is only one course open to us. His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin and the French Ambassador have been instructed to hand to the German Government the following document:

"Early this morning the German Chancellor issued a Proclamation to the German army which indicated clearly that he was about to attack Poland. Information which has reached His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government indicates that German troops have crossed the Polish frontier and that attacks upon Polish towns are proceeding. In these circumstances it appears to the Governments of the United Kingdom and of France that, by their action, the German Government have created conditions, namely, an aggressive act of force against Poland threatening the independence of Poland which calls for the implementation by the Governments of the United Kingdom and of France of the undertaking to Poland to come to her assistance. I am accordingly to inform Your Excellency that unless the German Government are prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government have suspended all aggressive action against Poland, and are prepared promptly to withdrawn their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland."

If a reply to this last warning is unfavourable—and I do not suggest that it is likely to be otherwise—His Majesty's Ambassador is instructed to ask for his passports.

In that case, we are ready. Yesterday we took further steps towards the completion of our defensive preparations. This morning we ordered complete mobilization of the whole of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. We have also taken a number of other measures, both at home and abroad, which the House will not perhaps expect me to specify in detail. Briefly, they represent the final step in accordance

with prearranged plans. These last can be put into force rapidly and are of such a nature that they can be deferred until war seems inevitable. Steps have also been taken under the powers conferred by the House last week to safeguard the position in regard to stocks of commodities of various kinds.

The thoughts of many of us must at this moment inevitably be turning back to 1914 and to a comparison of our position now with that which existed then. How do we stand this time? The answer is that all three Services are ready, and that the situation in all directions is far more favourable and reassuring than in 1914, while beside the fighting Services we have built up a vast organization of civil defence under our scheme of Air Raid Precautions. As regards the immediate man power requirements, the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force, are in the fortunate position of having almost as many men as they can conveniently handle at this moment. There are, however, certain categories of service in which men are immediately required, both for military and civil defence. These will be announced in detail through the press and the B.B.C. The main and most satisfactory point to observe is that there is to-day no need to make an appeal in a general way for recruits, such as was issued by Lord Kitchener 25 years ago. That appeal has been anticipated by many months and the men are already available. So much for the immediate present. Now we must look to the future. It is essential, in the face of the tremendous task which confronts us, more especially in view of our past experience in this matter, to organize our man power this time upon as methodical, equitable, and economical a basis as possible. We therefore propose immediately to introduce legislation directed to that end. A Bill will be laid before you which, for all practical purposes, will amount to an expansion of the military training act. Under its operation all men between the age of 18 and 41 will be rendered liable to military service if and when called upon. It is not intended at the outset that any considerable number of men other than those already liable shall be called up, and steps will be taken to ensure that the manpower essentially required by industry shall not be taken away. There is one other allusion which I should like to make before I end my speech and that is to record my satisfaction and the satisfaction of His Majesty's Government that, throughout the last days of crisis, Signor Mussolini also has been doing his best to reach a solution. It now only remains for us to set our teeth and to enter upon this struggle, which we ourselves earnestly endeavoured to avoid, with determination to see it through to the end. We shall enter it with a clear conscience with the support of the Dominions and the British Empire, and the moral approval of the greater part of the world. We have no quarrel with the German people except that they allow themselves to be governed by a Nazi Government. As long as that Government exists and pursues the methods it has so persistently followed during the last two years,

there will be no peace in Europe. We shall merely pass from one crisis to another and see one country after another attacked by methods which have now become familiar to us in their sickening technique. We are resolved that these methods must come to an end. If, out of the struggle, we again re-establish on the world the rules of good faith and the renunciation of force, why then even the sacrifices that will be entailed upon us will find their fullest justification."

XVI

The message given to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs by His Majesty's Ambassador at 9.40 p.m. on the 1st of September, 1939.

'On instructions of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs I have the honour to make the following communication:

Early this morning the German Chancellor issued a proclamation to the German army which indicated clearly that he was about to attack Poland.

Information which has reached His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government indicates that German troops have crossed the Polish frontier and that attacks upon Polish towns are proceeding.

In these circumstances, it appears to the Governments of the United Kingdom and France that by their action the German Government have created conditions (viz. an aggressive act of force against Poland threatening the independence of Poland) which call for the implementation by the Governments of United Kingdom and France of the undertaking to Poland to come to her assistance.

I am accordingly to inform Your Excellency that unless the German Government are prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government have suspended all aggressive action against Poland and are prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland."

XVII

The statement of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom delivered in the House of Commons on the 2nd of September, 1939:

"Sir Nevile Henderson was received by Herr Von Ribbentrop at half past nine last night and delivered the warning message which was read to the House yesterday. Herr Von Ribbentrop replied that he must submit the communication to the German Chancellor. Our Ambassador declared his readiness to receive the Chancellor's reply. Up to the present no reply has been received. It may be that the delay is caused by consideration of a proposal which meanwhile had been put forward by the Italian Government that hostilities should cease and that there should then immediately be a conference between the five powers, Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany and Italy. While appreciating the efforts of the Italian Government, His Majesty's Government for their part would find it impossible to take part in a conference whilst Poland is being subjected to invasion, her towns are under bombardment and Danzig is being made the subject of a unilateral settlement by force. His Majesty's Government will, as stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory. They are in communication with the French Government as to the limit of time within which it would be necessary for the British and French Governments to know whether the German Government was prepared to effect such a withdrawal. If the German Government should agree to withdraw their forces, His Majesty's Government would be willing to regard the position as being the same as it was before the German forces crossed the frontier, that is to say, the way would be opened to discussion between the German and Polish Governments on the matters at issue between them on the understanding that the settlement arrived at was one that safeguarded the vital interests of Poland and was secured by an international guarantee. If the German and Polish Governments wished that other powers should be associated with them in the discussion then His Majesty's Government for their part would be willing to agree. There is one other matter to which allusion should be made in order that the present situation may be perfectly clear. Yesterday Herr Forster, who on the 23rd August had in contravention of the Danzig Constitution become the head of the State, decreed the incorporation of Danzig in the German Reich and the dissolution of the Constitution. Herr Hitler was asked to give effect to this Decree by German law. At a meeting of the Reichstag yesterday morning a law was passed for the reunion of Danzig with the Reich. The international status of Danzig as a Free City is established by a Treaty of which His Majesty's Government are a signatory and the Free City was placed under the protection of the League of Nations. The rights given to Poland in Danzig by Treaty are defined and con-

firmed by agreement concluded between Danzig and Poland. The action taken by the Danzig authorities and the Reichstag yesterday is the final step in the unilateral repudiation of these international instruments which could only be modified by negotiation. His Majesty's Government do not therefore recognize either the validity of the grounds on which the action of the Danzig authorities was based, the validity of this action itself, or of the effect given to it by the German Government."

XVIII

The communication handed to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs by His Majesty's Ambassador at 9.00 a.m. on the 3rd of September, 1939.

"Sir,—

In the communication which I had the honour to make to you on 1st September, I informed you, on the instructions of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom satisfactory assurances that the German Government had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would without hesitation fulfil their obligations towards Poland. Although this communication was made more than twenty-four hours ago no reply has been received and the German attacks upon Poland have been continued and intensified. I have accordingly the honour to inform you that unless not later than 11 a.m. British summer time to-day, September 3rd, satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the German Government and have reached His Majesty's Government in London a state of war will exist between the two countries as from that hour."

XIX

The statement of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom delivered in the House of Commons on the 3rd of September, 1939.

"When I spoke last night to the House I could not but be aware that in some parts of the House there were doubts and some bewilderment as to whether there had been any weakening hesitation or vacillation on the part of His Majesty's Government. In the circumstances I make no reproach, for if I had been in the same position as Honourable Members not sitting on this bench and not in possession of all the information which

we had, I should very likely have felt the same. The statement which I have to make this morning will show that there were no grounds for doubt. We were in consultation all day yesterday with the French Government and we felt that the intensified action which the Germans were taking against Poland allowed no delay in making our own position clear. Accordingly we decided to send to our Ambassador in Berlin instructions which he was to hand at nine o'clock this morning to the German Foreign Secretary and which read as follows:—

‘SIR,—In the communication which I had the honour to make to you on the 1st September, I informed you, on the instructions of His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom satisfactory assurances that the German Government had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom would without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland. Although this communication was made more than twenty-four hours ago no reply has been received and the German attacks upon Poland have been continued and intensified. I have accordingly the honour to inform you that unless not later than 11 a.m. British summer time to-day, September 3rd, satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the German Government and have reached His Majesty’s Government in London a state of war will exist between the two countries as from that hour.’

That was the final note. No such undertaking was received by the time stipulated and consequently this country is at war with Germany. I am in a position to inform the House that according to arrangements made between the British and French Governments, the French Ambassador in Berlin is at this moment making a similar *démarche* accompanied also by a definite time limit. The House has already been made aware of our plans. As I said the other day, we are ready. This is a sad day for all of us and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in, during my public life, has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do that is to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself. I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been reestablished.”

XX

The reply of the Government of the German Reich on the 3rd of September, 1939, to the communications from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of the 1st and 3rd of September, 1939. [Unrevised text.]

The German Reich government has received the ultimatum of the British government dated September 3, 1939. The German government has the honour to reply as follows:—

1. The German government and the German people refuse to accept from the British government the ultimate requests or to fulfil them.
2. Since a good many months, a condition exists at our eastern borders which in effect amounts to war.

After the Versailles Treaty had cut Germany to pieces, all German governments were refused a peaceful solution of these problems. The National Socialist government, too, has made efforts after the year 1933 to bring about a revision of the worst mistakes committed under the Treaty of Versailles by peaceful means.

It was in the first place the British government which made every practical revision impossible by their intransigent position.

If it had not been for the British government interfering, the German people and the German government are convinced that between Germany and Poland a satisfactory arrangement could have been brought about and a solution be found which would have been fair to both sides, for Germany did not have the intention and never has demanded that Poland be destroyed.

Germany only wanted to have a revision brought about of those stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles which well-informed statesmen of all peoples, for some time after the dictates of Versailles had been delivered, considered as unbearable for a big nation, as well as detrimental to the political and economic interests of the east of Europe, unbearable in the long run and, therefore, impossible to execute.

British statesmen were in line with these declarations when they said that the solution imposed forcibly on Germany in the east would only lead to future wars. In order to avoid this danger, it was the desire of all German governments, and particularly the intention of the present National Socialist people's government here, that a solution be found.

It is the responsibility of the policy of the British cabinet to have put obstacles in the way of such a peaceful revision.

The British government in an unprecedented step in humane history, has given plenipotentiary powers to the Polish government to undertake whatever actions Poland might want to consider. The British government gave assurances to the Polish government, no matter under

what circumstances, that it could take steps of defence against no matter what provocative actions. The British government assured its military support to Poland in such a case.

Thereupon, the Polish terror against the people residing in the territories once severed from Germany and particularly against the German people there assumed proportions which could no longer be borne.

The Free City of Danzig particularly was dealt with in contradiction to all the legal stipulations, first economically and then in matters of customs policies and was even menaced with destruction, only to be completely submitted in a military sense and to be severed from communications with the outside world.

All this the British government knew very well. The British government was informed of the infringements against the laws which determined the Statute of Danzig and, by giving plenipotentiary powers to Poland, the British government has approved of all these illegal acts.

Moved by the suffering of the German people who were being tortured and inhumanly treated by the Polish authorities, the German government, which for five months had been looking on patiently without taking any aggressive action against Poland, has only addressed this morning a warning to the Polish government that these conditions would be unbearable in the long run. The German government also made it plain that it will take measures of self defence in case other help was not granted to the German population.

All these facts were well known to the British government. It would have been easy for them to exercise a strong influence in Warsaw and to exhort the rulers that they should apply principles of justice and humanity, and also to observe the stipulations they had entered into. The British government has not done so. On the contrary, by constantly insisting on the obligations that she come to the rescue of Poland under all circumstances, the British government has only encouraged the Polish government to continue in the criminal attitude which was endangering the peoples of Europe.

3. The British government could have saved the peace of Europe, but it has refused the proposals of Mussolini, although the German Reich's government had stated their willingness to consider these proposals. The British government, therefore, is responsible for all the suffering and all the unhappiness which now will come over so many nations.

4. After all the attempts to bring about a peaceful solution and to reach an agreement accordingly, after all these efforts had been made impossible by the intransigence of the Polish government which was being backed up by England, and, after the conditions similar to civil war which had persisted for a number of months at the eastern border of Germany without the British government raising any objections whatsoever, and after these conditions had grown to a point where

they amounted to overt attacks on German territory, the German government decided that it was unbearable for a major power to tolerate the continuance of these conditions and the menace which was coming from outside. Also, it was necessary in the interest of the domestic peace of the German people to bring an end to these conditions.

After the governments of the democratic countries had sabotaged all the possibilities of revision which still could have been applied to secure the peace and tranquillity and the honour of the German Reich, the German government decided that Poland's attacks would have to be counteracted by similar measures. The German government is not willing to tolerate conditions in order to make it possible for Great Britain to execute her obligations to Poland. The German government is not willing to tolerate conditions similar to those now existing in Palestine, which is a British protectorate.

Particularly, and above all, the German people are not willing to continue to be ill-treated by the Poles.

5. The German government has therefore refused all attempts to force Germany by ultimatums, that the German army, which has taken steps for the protection of the country, should be withdrawn, which would amount to restoration of conditions of restlessness and injustice as they have existed before.

The threat that Germany would otherwise be attacked in war is in complete harmony with the intention of the large number of British politicians as announced over a number of years. The German government and the German people have assured the British people time and again that they are desirous of bringing about an understanding with them, and even to establish a close friendship.

If the British government has refused to consider all these offers, and now makes a reply consisting in overt acts of war, this is not the responsibility of the German people and its government, but exclusively of the British cabinet. Those men who for years have been preaching the destruction and eradication of the German nation are primarily to be held responsible. The German people and its government do not have the intention, as it seems Great Britain has, to rule the world, but they are determined to defend their own freedom and independence and primarily their own lives.

The intention which has been communicated to us on behalf of the British government by Mr. King Hall—(Commander Stephen King-Hall, retired naval officer who in private capacity sent anti-Hitler letters to German citizens)—an intention to destroy the German people even more than they have been destroyed by the Versailles Treaty—that intention we hereby take notice of, and we shall therefore reply to all acts of attack coming from England, no matter under what form, with the same weapons.

Berlin, September 3, 1939.

B

**COMMUNICATIONS ADDRESSED BY THE PRIME MINISTER
OF CANADA TO THE HEADS OF CERTAIN EUROPEAN
STATES IN AUGUST, 1939, AND REPLIES THERETO**

I

The telegram of the 25th of August, 1939, from the Prime Minister of Canada to the President of the Polish Republic

The people of Canada are of one mind in believing that there is no international problem which cannot be settled by conference and negotiation. They equally believe that force is not a substitute for reason, and that the appeal to force as a means of adjusting international differences defeats rather than furthers the ends of justice. They are prepared to join what authority and power they may possess to that of the other nations of the British Commonwealth in seeking a just and equitable settlement of the great problems with which nations are faced.

On behalf of the Canadian people, but equally in the interests of humanity itself, I join with those of other countries and powers who have appealed to you, in the firm hope that your great power and authority will be used to prevent impending catastrophe by having recourse to every possible peaceful means to effect a solution of the momentous issues of this period of transition and change in world affairs.

II

The telegram of the 25th of August, 1939, from the Prime Minister of Canada to the Chief of the Government of Italy

At this critical moment in the history of the world I wish, on behalf of the people of Canada, to join in the appeals which have been made to you to use your great power and influence to ensure a peaceful settlement of the issues that threaten the peace of mankind.

The people of Canada are firmly convinced that it should be possible, by conference and negotiation, to find a just settlement of all existing problems without resort to force. They are prepared to join with the peoples of other countries in doing all in their power to achieve this end.

III

The telegram of the 25th of August, 1939, from the Prime Minister of Canada to Herr Hitler, Reichsfuhrer

The people of Canada are of one mind in believing that there is no international problem which cannot be settled by conference and negotiation. They equally believe that force is not a substitute for

reason, and that the appeal to force as a means of adjusting international differences defeats rather than furthers the ends of justice. They are prepared to join what authority and power they may possess to that of the other nations of the British Commonwealth in seeking a just and equitable settlement of the great problems with which nations are faced.

On behalf of the Canadian people, but equally in the interests of humanity itself, I join with those of other countries and powers who have appealed to you, in the firm hope that your great power and authority will be used to prevent impending catastrophe by having recourse to every possible peaceful means to effect a solution of the momentous issues of this period of transition and change in world affairs.

IV

The telegram of the 27th of August, 1939, from the Chief of the Government of Italy to the Prime Minister of Canada

In reply to your message, I wish to assure you that I shall leave untried no effort to safeguard the peace of the world—a lasting peace, that is to say, a just peace.

V

The reply from the President of the Polish Republic delivered to the Prime Minister of Canada by the Consul General for Poland on the 29th of August, 1939.

The Government of Poland appreciate the efforts of the Prime Minister of Canada for maintaining of the peace and is sure that the Canadian Government has no doubts as to the fact that it is not the Government of Poland who makes the aggressive demands and provokes the international crisis.

VI

On the 29th of August, 1939, the Consul General of Germany in Ottawa informed the Prime Minister of Canada that the latter's message of the 25th of August, 1939, had been received personally by the Reichsfuhrer.

